



PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MAN WHO STARTED “RODEO” FIRE SENTENCED TO TEN YEARS

PHOENIX, ARIZONA –The United States Attorney’s Office for the District of Arizona, announced that on March 8, 2004, Leonard Gregg, 8/25/72, of Cibecue, Arizona, was sentenced to ten years, by United States District Judge James Teilborg, in Phoenix, Arizona. He was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$27,882.502.00. Upon his release from prison, he will serve a period of 36 months of supervised release under the guidance of the United States Probation Office. The defendant must serve a minimum of 85% of his prison sentence before he is eligible for release.

In the morning hours at approximately 10:45 a.m. on June 18, 2002, a wild lands fire was reported south of the Germantown area in Cibecue, Arizona, within the confines of the Ft. Apache Indian Reservation. This fire was suppressed by the tribal fire department and was approximately 1 acre in size. United States Forest Service investigators determined that the “Pina” Fire was intentionally human caused. A shoe print was also located at the scene.

In the afternoon hours between 3:30-4:00 p.m., on June 18, 2002, a wild land fire was discovered less than 2 miles northeast of the Cibecue Community, within the confines of the Ft. Apache Indian Reservation. This fire was labeled as the “Rodeo Fire”. Fire crews from the BIA’s Branch of the Forestry

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responded to this site and made attempts at putting out the fire. With the severe drought conditions and the prevailing winds, the fire became unmanageable as well as a safety concern to fire personnel. The following morning (06/19/02), the fire developed to over 600 acres and when the winds increased later on in the morning, the fire quickly spread and became a serious threat to the communities surrounding the Show Low area. The "Rodeo" Fire was also determined to have been intentionally human caused. A shoe print was also found at the ignition point of the fire and was similar to the print found at the "Pina" Fire.

Leonard Gregg was interviewed on June 29, 2002, in reference to both the Pina and Rodeo fires and admitted setting both fires. He confirmed during the interview that he was wearing the recovered boots at the time he set both fires. Gregg indicated that he expected to make money from the fires due to his seasonal employment as a member of a Bureau of Indian Affairs fire crew. Gregg and the fire crew that he worked with were among the first to be called out to fight the "Rodeo" Fire. Gregg admitted that he set both fires by using stick matches to ignite the dry grass. He further admitted that he expected to work on the fire suppression team for about a day, but did not expect the fire to develop to the degree that it did.

In response to today's sentencing Paul Charlton, United States Attorney for the District of Arizona indicated "Although justice was served today, there is no way to make the victims on the forest whole again. We only hope that this tragedy is never repeated."

Leonard Gregg had entered a plea of guilty on October 20, 2003 to two counts of Setting Timber Afire in violation of Title 178 United States Code, Section 1855.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, White Mountain Apache Police Department, United States Forest Service, Pinetop-Lakeside Police Department.

The prosecution was handled by Vincent Q. Kirby, Assistant United States Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

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